

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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Jersey City To Celebrate “Big Brothers Big Sisters Day” As Part of National Mentoring Month

JERSEY CITY – **Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy** and members of the **Municipal Council** in partnership with **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties** will celebrate “Big Brothers Big Sisters Day” from **10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** on **Tuesday, January 26, 2010** in **City Hall Council Chambers, 280 Grove Street**.

Over the years, various individuals had tried to re-establish a chapter of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in Hudson County, but to no avail. Last year, Big Brothers Big Sisters, under the leadership of Carlos Lejnieks, began a dialogue with Mayor Healy and were able to begin working in Jersey City. The organization began by serving a few dozen children, and has quickly grown to serve 157 Jersey City youth. It is anticipated that in 2010, Big Brothers Big Sisters will serve 425 Jersey City youngsters.

“The need for child mentoring services in Jersey City was great, and we were pleased when Big Brothers Big Sisters answered the call,” said **Mayor Healy**. “In one short year they have grown to serve 157 kids from zero. However, there is always a need for more mentors.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties, New Jersey (BBBS), whose motto is *Changing the Way Our Youth Grow Up in America*, is a nonprofit youth mentoring agency that provides structured and supported one-to-one mentoring relationships for area youth.

BBBS is a growing agency which has nearly tripled the number of children they served in less than a year. Also, as the country faces layoffs and downsizing, BBBS has been able to leverage private investments to staff up, quadrupling the number of full time employees since the fall of 2008. Their business plan has them growing from their current eight employees to approximately 80 full time staff in five years. This job creation will work to support the mentoring of more than 6,000 children every year by 2013. In addition, BBBS has hired two longtime Jersey City residents to assist in their mission.

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January is dubbed **National Mentoring Month** which raises awareness and mobilizes community volunteers to help young people achieve their potential. Volunteer mentors can play a powerful role in reducing drug abuse and youth violence while greatly enhancing a young person's prospects for leading a healthy and productive life. Increasing the mentoring services in the community assures safer streets and greatly improves the quality of life throughout a community.

"At this time in our nation's history, organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties are needed more than ever," said **Mayor Healy**. "They have the courage to grow, to make positive changes in our society and have a plan to succeed in those efforts."

Despite the efforts of BBBS, there is still a need for community and corporate support to continue to service the community. Currently, BBBS has formed strategic partnerships with companies and community organizations in Jersey City, such as Goldman Sachs and the United Way.

BBBS can continue to make a positive impact in the community and provide much needed services to those in need and are seeking further assistance. Big Brothers Big Sisters receives 75% of their funding from private donations which covers the costs of background checks and insurance, ensures trained professionals match children to caring and responsible, provide one-on-one and ongoing supervision and support for every match, provides cultural and social activities that enrich the opportunities for children.

For information on becoming a volunteer or sponsor, contact Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties at 973-642-2447 or by visiting BigsAndKids.org

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///